Seattle Light Rail Review Panel
Meeting Notes for November 15, 2000

Agenda Items
- Update on McClellan 30% design
- Schematic design briefing on signage and wayfinding, color palette

Commissioners Present
Rick Sundberg, Chair
Carolyn Law
Jay Lazerwitz
Jack Mackie
Mimi Sheridan
Paul Tomita

Staff Present
John Walser, Sound Transit
Barbara Goldstein, Arts Commission
Sue Kelly, CityDesign
Cheryl Sizov, CityDesign

The meeting opened with introductions all around and Panel approval of three sets of meeting notes; September 6th, October 4th, and October 18th. Before proceeding to the McClellan presentation, Amy Glenn updated the Panel on Citizen Advisory Committee recommendations from the McClellan Urban Design Study citing two key concepts:

1. Consolidation of pedestrian access into one location under the guideway
2. A strong pedestrian connection from the transit facility to the station

She added that acquisition or control of property between the station and Rainier Avenue is key to the town center concept inherent to the recommendations above. Without acquisition, the ability to create or foster a town center could be impacted greatly.

Update on McClellan 30% Schematic Design

Dan Jerome, OTAK
Sheila Klein, STart
David Klingston, OTAK
Darrel Turner, Boxwood Associates
John Walser, Sound Transit

John Walser recapped the decisions and actions that led Sound Transit to rethink the 30% design for McClellan station, noting that they wanted to take advantage of the results of the town center/urban design study to incorporate changes into the McClellan design. There have been significant design changes since last spring when the community and LRRP first saw 30% design:

- One (central) entrance to the station, where there had been two
- Creation of a pedestrian-activated core with a station that is part of the town center, but not dominating it
- Design that allows flexibility for future opportunities as the town center develops

We didn't want people descending from the platform to land right onto the plaza; but instead wanted to move them through some retail spaces. The vertical circulation core is concentrated in the center with either end of the station (at-grade) for retail. This focuses pedestrians on a single, central entrance to the platform. Property acquisition east of the station is still a question, and we won't know for awhile how that will resolve. In the meantime, we're trying to create a flexible station design that allows for a plaza at some future point.

We presented this design to the community on November 1st and received a positive response to the design. People were most interested in design details, suggesting to us that they were happy with the basic conceptual approach. Other details of the design include:

- The portal to the touchdown structure is retained fill, then an elevated guideway, then the platform itself, then aerial guideway until touchdown in MLK. The Arai Jackson team will design up to the south end of the touchdown, coordinating with OTAK at that juncture.
- There is some flexibility with architectural expression and vocabulary of the guideway itself. The standard one ST has designed is heavier, but at McClellan we're flattening out the bottom and adding corbeling and detail. We're considering a round column vs. the octagonal shape, but with a clear base, middle, and top. The material itself is still being decided; graffiti is an issue. The guideway is a thread through the system and must read holistically.
- At Cheasty we are proposing trees to restore/continue the rhythm present on the east side, putting new ones on the west side. Friends of Olmsted Parks are comfortable with this design.
- Most of the landscaping shown is a placeholder until more work can be done on it. For the portal, we are thinking of terracing behind the portal with native plant materials to continue the greenbelt aesthetic, but with more formal plantings out in front of the portal. This is a highly visible location—should the landscaping held to hide the portal or make it even more visible? Which approach is best?
- The groundplane under the guideway still needs work as well. There are a variety of conditions—sidewalks, streets, etc. We are looking at several art concepts for the area under the guideway including use of sculpture, lighting, and other artworks.

We (the consultants) feel very good about the design. We've learned a lot from the community in the last 1 ½ years, and it shows in the design. It actually took very little time to complete the redesign because all our previous knowledge came to bear and the design fell into place easily. The public is also interested in ensuring enough bike parking, and stresses the hope that the station will be a catalyst for the town center development—contributing to but not dominating the area. They also wanted the station to look like a building, to feel safe, approachable—we believe we have responded with this design.

The consolidated center entrance is a better design for the station as well as for future development. The location of Firestone and the fish and chips restaurant will remain, and this is a challenge. We still need the station to be visible while these uses are there, which is why the vertical circulation core acts as a "marker" for the station and a cue to pedestrians where to go. Stevens should be a nice "front door" to the station. The actual entry is buried internally, so we created a radial canopy to visually bring down the scale of the entry. The same radial design is reflected in the paving at the ground place, and reflects the many directions from which people are coming.

Conceptually the design is the opposite of the original design—softer, rounder, simpler forms—all to give a sense of clarity and calm to this busy area. We've drawn inspiration from Franklin High School in terms of use of brick and the rhythm of columns, but made it very "transparent" for security reasons. To make sure the design isn't only about vertical circulation, we've used columns along the guideway to give a sense of rhythm and "building" presence. This also supports transit-oriented development with approximately 2000 sf sized bays—a good size for future small retail spaces. The columns are a brick and steel combination providing support for the platform, lighting, and railings. The trelliswork of steel sets up the pattern for future retail spaces. We're

envisioning washes of light along the brick wall and under the guideway along with a very well-lit canopy. People will buy their ticket, then head off to either side of the station up to the platform. All the systems buildings will be housed within the brick enclosure between the two sets of stairs. The canopy coverage will extend the length of the platform, with windscreening and signage. We may install perpendicular screens as well to protect waiting passengers from wind/rain blowing down the guideway.

The lighting concept is for a canopy chandelier that is an artwork, then "scattering" the chandelier pieces under the guideway to light those spaces. The chandelier will be made of cobra head light fixtures outfitted with a warm source of light. We may create "nosegays" of lights to hang above the elevators or on the brick wall. The lighting under the guideway would be a simplified version of the larger entrance canopy chandelier. We're still considering whether to continue the lighting concept all the way into the portal. The chandeliers could also be effective in the stairway volume of space. With respect to landscaping, earlier concepts presented by Sasaki for plantings under the guideway are not going to work—plants won't grow there.

Before proceeding with Panel comments, Rick asked for any comments or questions from the audience.

Public Comment

- How are the design concepts developed by Sasaki—which have already been shown to the community—being factored into this work. Also are there safety issues re: the portal; such as people climbing in and around it? It is problematic to show different things to the community without an explanation of what happened to the earlier work. (We are sharing the Sasaki work with OTAK in order to collaborate on the final design, with a seamless transition from aerial to at-grade. Our ideas are in keeping with the Sasaki work, just with different materials.)
- There should be barriers to the portal to keep people from entering it, but don't let the barrier be a chain link fence.

Panel Discussion

- Thank you for re-exploring the whole McClellan area and station design. Beneath the aerial guideway, is the paving different from what is used for the walkway itself? *(We haven't worked out the detail of that yet, but there should be a distinction between the area under the guideway and the walkway.)*
- I'm concerned about the columns that land in the middle of Cheasty Boulevard in the middle of the vista. *(Yes, this is an engineering issue we're trying to resolve—the concern is the length of span if the column were removed.)*
- I like the station design overall, but what is that large, grey panel facing the street on the brick wall? *(That is an access door to the support systems. The existing alley will remain so the door would remain on one side or both.)*
- As you study the east and west elevations, also consider the south elevation—this is a large brick wall, two story tall, needs to be looked at.
- Will there be a windscreen at the ends of the platform too? Consider the OCS—this is the first illustration we've seen of the connection of the OCS. It looks slightly asymmetrical now. (*That is still under design resolution, right now there will be OCS poles coming through the station.*)
- I appreciate the effort given to the experience of the portal landscape, and tend to prefer the cross pattern of landscaping.

- Where are the bus stops along Rainier? The connections from the bus layover to the station is still hard to envision. The jog in the street crossing is farther removed than last time. (Show a stronger connection to the entry at Stevens. *(Metro is placing all of the bus routes except for the Rainier bus routes into this facility, so the #9 and #7 buses Metro is hoping to keep on the street, but that decision will be impacted by whether it is a pull-out or in the travel land. One stop may move closer to the station, but the City requests pull-out lanes, there may be a stalemate. We're trying to expand the sidewalk width at Stevens, pushing the street to the side of the right-of-way to get more space.)*
- I like the art lighting ideas, but about during daytime—what would the effect be then? *(We're also interested and concerned about that, we hope that they have a strong daytime & nighttime presence.)*
- I'm very happy to see the discussion about the aerial/portal connection happening. Look at the handmade quality and texture of brick as a way to break down the massiveness of the structures. Lighting ideas are great, and they must be under the guideway. Why does the portal have a proboscis? *(There is a street at the portal, what you are seeing is at plane. We can't clad the columns in brick because in case of an earthquake, we need to be able to examine them structurally, the columns in the station can be clad because they are not supporting the guideway, they are independent of the guideway structure.)*
- But you could still introduce texture into the concrete, could you not? *(Yes.)*
- So that makes the elevations from inside looking out, not just outside looking in. We need to see some elevations from being underneath and looking back out past the two columns, one holding the aerial guideway and the brick clad column. Before abandoning landscaping under the guideway, there are plants that grow in the Northwest in shadow; it is a question of maintenance. I'm still concerned about the connection from the bus facility. Since we probably won't have a plaza on opening day, let's go all out with pedestrian treatment. Show what the art will be on opening day.
- I would reiterate the need to treat the stairs all around the south façade; concern regarding the service door; and columns that are nicely articulated on the outside, but what about inside the station? Maybe the guideway columns could be highly articulated with some tile or a concrete design, when they are inside the stations. *(We're trying to give a sense of "civilization" to the structure.)*
- The idea of ST working with consultants to push the issue of what can be done with the support structure for the guideway system. What is the overall intention of the lighting idea? Are you intending to light with the guideway, the entire structure, or is it for pedestrian safety? (*Needs a certain amount of light for safety and to make the station visible*.) Perhaps better as pedestrian lighting here versus blasting the underside with light. Focus the lighting on the station, not the rest of the guideway.
- Since the community mentioned Franklin High School, there may be some clues for use of brickwork on the columns.
- We are starting to see some very elegant brickwork in the city—consider some of those examples as well.
- This is a very handsome backdrop to the Firestone property! Seriously, will wayfinding still be adequate after that area is eventually developed? We may need design guidelines for those lots in front to guide that development so that it is complementary to the station. Stevens is the City's right-of-way, but can't we design it to favor the pedestrian while still allowing service access?
- What happens in the big box that is holding the little boxes (enclosure for elevator and systems buildings)? I have a concern regarding visibility to and from the south plaza. This box makes it virtually invisible to transit riders. (*There are access requirements around TPPS*

communication signals and the space around them is a requirement of the system itself. How we treat the south facade is a design concern for the design team.)

With that, Rick Sundberg summarized Panel comments into an action, as follows:

Action

The Panel extends compliments to Sound Transit and its consultants for the revised 30% schematic design. The design has come a long way since the beginning, and is beginning to work well as a station. Thank you also for looking comprehensively at the area from the portal to the touchdown structure-we encourage you to continue that approach. We are also excited about the lighting concept-its grand scale, individual fittings, and urban character. The only concern is whether the lighting design is equally effective during daytime hours. In summation, the Panel recommends approval of the revised 30% design as presented, requesting further resolution of the following items in the next phase of design:

- ***The Firestone site is a critical piece of the town center concept and should be acquired in order to ensure the ability to create a plaza and a principal entry to the station, along with supportive transit-oriented development in the future.***

- ***The pedestrian connection between the bus facility and the Link station is unclear and, particularly with the continued presence of the Firestone and restaurant buildings, circuitous. The new central entry design is dependent upon a strong pedestrian connection between the station and various pedestrian arrival points, including the bus facility, Rainier Avenue, passenger drop-off area, Cheasty Boulevard, and the south plaza.***

- ***If Stevens Street is to serve as the primary pedestrian route, it will require significant attention to landscaping, sidewalks, and other aspects of pedestrian use and comfort. The design will also need to better reconcile a strong pedestrian use of the street with existing vehicle circulation, parking, and loading activities.***

- ***The possibility of not having "eyes" on the south plaza (currently a blank wall to the north contributes to the plaza's isolation) is potentially quite problematic. There is still time in the design process to fix this, but it might be good to start talking with potential retailers now as well as looking at other design solutions.***

- ***Further development of the lighting art and how it will work for both nighttime and daytime effect.***

- ***Better resolution of the current collision between the guideway and Cheasty Boulevard; resolving the conflict of guideway columns in the line of sight east and west along Cheasty and their integration with the landscape design.***

Briefing on Signage, Wayfinding, and Color Palette

Jon Benz, Benz Design
Lana Nelson, Sound Transit

Lana Nelson provided the Panel with detailed illustrations of signage and wayfinding elements for the Link light rail system at prototypical at-grade stations. Highlights of their presentation include the following points:

- We are using green and white, as these are the colors Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) uses to notify public transportation systems, such as the ferries.
- This is a regional program for all modes of transit, though the presentation today focuses on light rail.
- We have already installed some new signage at King Street station, Tacoma Dome, Sumner, and Auburn.
- The regional "T" is 15' to the top of the pole, painted aluminum, and has been tested with limited-vision individuals for legibility. We have already installed a "T" at the Weller Street Bridge where you can view to see how it looks in place. All Link stations are slated to have a regional "T" because of the transportation options at each station.
- The information panels are made of phenolic resin which, by all sources we have, is durable and vandal-resistant. Each pole will have wings on the pole that holds panels, one a way finding panel and a map beside with the transit icons.
- The tactile raised letter version with the name of the station posted at 60", as required by law.
- Under the skin of this system is an industrial design problem—it is like an erector set of interchangeable parts throughout the system.
- The colorway is an identity element for Link and Sound Transit, whereas the architecture at each station is more about the neighborhood it is situated in. We're looking at a dark blue background with accent colors, plus a copper painted "fin" that is part of the structural element.

Following Lana's presentation and Panel discussion, Allen Parker and Mark Hinshaw proceeded to present the color palette in more detail, summarized below:

- The Sound Transit philosophy is a balanced approach between responsiveness to context and system requirements. Over 2/3 of Sound Transit's own design guidelines encourage individuality.
- We want Link to also have its own identity, using certain materials and forms. This is where the idea of the beacon comes in, along with the use of steel and glass and color.
- We need a standard color for ease of maintenance, as well as identity; something neutral to work with a variety of other materials and compatible with the art program and signage. Lastly, color that will keep the stations "quiet" and timeless.
- We're proposing deep blue and charcoal grey for the painted elements of structural members; off-white for non-structural elements; and red for accent colors. Dark green tends to be overused.

<u>Discussion</u>

- Are the tops of the poles, the finials, lit? (*No.*)
- The paid and not paid zones are shown in your drawing as red-hatched areas; is that literal? Will the paving be different? (*No, this is just illustrative of the different parts of the platform, although we could consider a paving treatment to reflect that.*) I'm not objecting to it—the ADA warning band is okay. (*Lana chairs the accessibility group, which is reviewing wayfinding in stations. We need a consistent stopping location for vision-impaired individuals; something that is a tactile element. We're also looking at building a tactile path in the pavement.*)
- I found that Portland's system was confusing in terms of how to purchase the ticket and when to use it. (*Fare machines at the commuter stations are the same that will be used for Link—you can see these at the King Street station.*)

- Brackets are an important issue in an urban setting, as are other attachments and retrofits to existing buildings. (*We acknowledge that the "T" at Weller Street Bridge is not well done. The one at Jackson is better, but there are still some design issues to work out. There will be a better opportunity for architectural coordination with Link stations.*)
- Can we start to see this signage and wayfinding showing up on the station drawings? It makes a big difference seeing things in context with all other elements.
- Yes, we talked about the need to get a comprehensive look at one station at a time; e.g. the Edmunds station, at our last LRRP meeting.
- Since the panel spent a lot of extra time on the MLK Corridor, and most of these pole elements will predominate at the at-grade stations. This is one that we feel we will really want to see how it integrates with all of the other poles that will be out on the street. The panel had talked earlier about finding someway to rethink even the street signage. (*We've directed station designers that this is the signage program and they need to provide the architecture that signs can be affixed to in order to have fewer poles. A big part of our job is to be responsive to the ADA community. This creates some "givens" for us; for example a requirement 60' to 65' between signs of the names of the stations.*)
- Will there be signs for northbound and southbound trains? (*We're using destination messages instead of north/south references.*) What about testing this signage proposal with people—do they know the difference between light rail, commuter rail, etc. and symbols that go with them? (*This is a very icon-based system using many international symbols. We haven't invented any symbols; these are all used by others*)
- Do the signs say Link anywhere, or does that matter? (*It does on the top of the sign bands.*)

The Panel thanked Lana for her presentation and agreed to visit King Street station signage, and follow up with comments on signage in the context of reviewing each station. Following the color palette presentation, the Panel said that in order to respond meaningfully they need to see the concept applied in the presentation drawings for each station. They also said that if the signage and colors need to be predictable, that is even more reason why Sound Transit should "let go" with the architecture in order to make stations identifiable and individual in nature. The Panel thus did not formally recommend approval of the signage, wayfinding, and color palette; preferring to comment on the concepts as part of future station design presentations.

Briefing on Systems Structures

Dick Eacker, Sound Transit
John Walser, Sound Transit

Sound Transit provided several handouts describing the technical and functional requirements for each type of systems structure, locations proposed to date, and samples of actual pre-fabricated buildings from manufacturers and other light rail systems around the country. Specifics mentioned were:

- TPSS buildings give power to the 1500 volt overhead contact system (OCS). We are able to save money by spreading out the buildings and installing fewer of them. There are 11 proposed for the Link system. They require truck access for maintenance.
- All systems buildings are about 10' tall, although of varying lengths and widths.
- Pre-fabricated buildings are cheaper, more consistence and reliable, and provide easy start-up of the system. Systems buildings for the tunnel stations will need to be custom built, however. Portland's costs for custom-built structures ran approximately $350 per square foot, and they have water leaking through the roof!

- With a low-bid system, bidders bring in different brands of equipment. Using a sole source can help that, but it is still a problem. One contract is better than several.

Discussion

- Can you get buildings without appendages (such as the ones we see in these photos) on the outside? (*Yes, mostly, except for cooling equipment.*)
- I understand the need for access, but why all that clearance around each building? Can the clearance be planned specifically for each site? (*Dick: Maybe. John: The ground material below the slab extending beyond the structure—I view these all as neutral elements that fade into the background. The screens are for security and aesthetics. We're thinking of an opaque screen so as not to call attention to it. Norie: The artists are looking at ways to express sustainability and "greening" in the screens; also possible modular screens. These could be very sculptural. They might also be different when in plazas than when elsewhere, depending upon how many people are around them and other uses.*)
- I want to thank John for responding in such a detailed way with the handouts. I told him what we needed to see and he turned it around in a very short time, we really appreciate that. The panel has talked about this over a year ago asking for the location and dimensions of these buildings. It is frustrating to find out that although you may not have known exact locations yet, but that this information is available in terms of systems nationally or worldwide, why we couldn't have begun to review it. What I am hearing is ST engineering group is in a position of having to move forward in the next 2-4 weeks on these structures for the at grade stations. (*Essentially the design team is moving within 2 months of final design and in order for them to layout the plazas or to work on the screening they need to know where these things are going, as they have their 60% submittal freeze date in the middle of December. If the information isn't there they cannot include it in their drawings that are submitted to the city.)*
- The design guidelines that we are writing do address this specifically at the at-grade stations. We talk about not wanting to use up the 100% corners in any location. I was called and told that this would not work, we have places that these buildings need to be, so our solution was to look at where they are proposed, and we can address the location of these buildings.
- Pre-fab isn't necessarily an incorrect approach; it is just unfortunate that these examples are not the best. I know there is something better out there.
- There are perhaps more opportunities with the screening concept than with "little buildings."
- I'm sorry, but I think screening is like putting a skirt on a pig! Designing and detailing a clean structure might be better than trying to hide it.
- The art program can't and shouldn't be expected to save this with its budget. (*The architectural budget has some dollars in it now for screening.*)
- At Royal Brougham, you have that at line between the rails vs. at the Lander station where you were able to find some off-site space. (*We are pinched for space at Royal Brougham, the clearances between the tracks and the buildings, we don't want someone to be walking around these to create security issues.*)
- With respect to the clearances, is there a technical reason they buildings couldn't but up against one another, is it because of signal interference? (*It is not a matter of signal interference, it is because of building maintenance. Getting between the buildings to repaint or repair panels. We can not guarantee that all these buildings will be from the same manufacturer so they may look odd next to each other.)*

John Walser noted that Royal Brougham and Lander is at 60% moving to 90% design. Due to the lack of time, the Panel decided to continue the systems structures discussion at a near future meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 PM.